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California Polytechnic State University

Contact: Amy Hewes
805-756-6402
ahewes@calpoly.edu

Cal Poly Concrete Canoe Places Fifth in the Nation

SAN LUIS OBISPO – Each year, students from Cal Poly's Society of Civil Engineers pit themselves against teams from approximately 220 colleges across the U.S. in a year-long contest involving design know-how, project management, engineering expertise, oral and written presentations, endurance, imagination and sheer muscle.

It's the Concrete Canoe Competition—and this year Cal Poly paddled to fifth in the nation, with a first in the coed sprint race and a second in "final product." Cal Poly also brought home the ACI Innovative Design Award, which recognized the canoe's unique, M.C. Escher-inspired tile mosaic design detail.

The 20th Annual ASCE National Concrete Canoe Competition was held at the University of Washington on June 14-16. Cal Poly's team was led by civil engineering seniors Jason Kump from Nipomo, John Layous from King City, Jason Marshall from San Luis Obispo, and Skye Orvis from Livermore.

"One of the highlights was winning the design award," said Jason Marshall. "It really represented the time, effort, and teamwork that went into the project. We also won a race for the first time. Our coed sprint team placed first by a tenth of a second—it literally came down to a photo finish."

This was the second year in a row that Cal Poly scored well at the national level, coming in second last year. Cal Poly's winning formula, according to Marshall, includes faculty support, student interest, and the spirit of innovation.

"Two huge reasons for our success are professors Garrett Hall and Eric Kasper, and the Civil Engineering Department," said Marshall. "They've always been supportive of whatever we need, whether it is fundraising, access to rooms, or technical help. Plus, we have an extremely large and active SCE chapter. Almost everyone in the chapter helps out in some way; during construction day, we actually have more students working on the project than we can use!"

The last thing that has lead to Cal Poly's success is the ability of Cal Poly students to think outside of the box said Marshall. No idea is too strange or obscure. Dozens of different ideas are tried, with mixed results.

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California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407
805.756.7266
polynews@calpoly.edu